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ABSTRACT

In recent years, library associations and other library and information bodies have often provided trade exhibitions at their annual conferences or study weekends. Such an exhibition can only be a success if considerable attention is paid to detail. This British handbook is a guide to organizing a trade exhibition. A vital first point is the choice of venue. A checklist is provided for reviewing potential exhibition sites. Using the facilities carefully once chosen is another area to be considered. Details are given for the usual booking process to insure the best selection of potential exhibitors. A list of general points to consider covers other details that an organizer should not overlook. A sample exhibition booking form is included. (SLD)

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MEETING THE NEEDS OF LIBRARY TRADE EXHIBITORS

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A Handbook for Exhibition Organisers prepared by

The Association of Subscription Agents

FOREWORD

AMONGST the subjects discussed at the March 1990 Annual General Meeting of The Association of Subscription Agents (A.S.A.) was "The Role of Exhibitors at Library Conferences". A number of members expressed disquiet at the way some conferences were organised as regards exhibition arrangements.

Indeed, during the past year there has been much discussion on this theme amongst representatives of companies who regularly exhibit at the conferences of various library oriented groups. In particular, conversation has revolved around the value of attending such events; exhibitors are commercial organisations whose promotional budgets are not unlimited, and who thus have to make value judgements as to whether expensive staff time is better spent at exhibitions, in the office or perhaps 'on the road' visiting customers.

The number of events it is possible to attend seems to have increased in recent years and suppliers, appreciating that the extra income they contribute to a conference may be crucial to the viability of that event, have begun to look more critically at the organisation, timing and location of the various exhibitions.

Whilst in an ideal world it would be useful to have an exhibitors' representative on each organising committee, this is clearly impractical. Therefore the A.S.A. decided to take the initiative and create a document bringing together all the points raised by exhibitors - effectively a "check-list" for exhibition organisers.

My thanks to the many members of the trade who have given their advice and ideas. I am particularly indebted to John Merriman formerly of Blackwells whose organisation of the U.K. Serials Group conference since that groups inception, has been a shining example to all who aspire to please their delegates and exhibitors, and to Albert Prior of Swets, whose article "Don't Forget the Exhibitor" (LA Record August 1989) should be read by anyone planning a conference and exhibition.

Jonathan G. Waring
July 1991

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MEETING THE NEEDS OF LIBRARY TRADE EXHIBITORS

Guidelines for Exhibition Organisers

Introduction

INCREASINGLY in recent years groups of the Library Association and other library and information bodies have provided trade exhibitions at their annual conferences or study weekends, both as an additional attraction for delegates and as a source of revenue. Indeed some conferences would probably not be viable without this income.

However, organising these events is not a simple matter and can prove arduous for a busy librarian who has many other responsibilities. Unfortunately this tends to result in a new person carrying out this function each year; thus the experience gained one year is lost as each organiser starts afresh.

An exhibition can only be a success if considerable attention is paid to detail. Exhibitors will only be encouraged to return if they find that an event has been professionally organised and well run, and that every effort has been made to ensure that the exhibition is well attended.

**Bring year on year continuity to exhibition arrangements perhaps by ensuring that not more than half the organising committee changes each year. Develop and hand down your own checklist of points to be watched each year.*

choice of venue

IT HAS to be accepted that in general the sums allocated by libraries for staff attendance at conferences are limited and thus the purpose-built conference venues in hotels tend to be out of reach. However, competition amongst universities, polytechnics and colleges for lucrative conference trade is increasing, bringing a welcome impetus to improve standards; indeed a number of institutions are in the process of developing special facilities - let's hope they don't price themselves out of the market! It should be remembered, those selecting conference and exhibition venues have it in their power to demand good value for money and thus promote the raising of standards.

- *Work well in advance in order to have the widest possible choice of venues*
- *Facilities for exhibitors should play an important part in the selection of venue*

The following is a checklist of important points to take into consideration when looking at potential exhibition sites:

- *The exhibition should be held on one level, preferably in one hall (or at least in no more than two interconnected halls).*
- *The hall or room should be light and airy and of such a design that all exhibitors feel that they have been treated equally.*
- *The layout of the exhibition must not be cramped. Allow for 8' x 4' stands with reasonable gangways so that delegates congregating at one stand do not 'crowd' the others. Decide an absolute maximum number of exhibitors and* ***stick to that figure.*** *Resist the temptation to take on more than is acceptable within the given space; do not risk aggravating the majority for the sake of additional revenue from one or two firms.*
- *The site of the exhibition should be as near as possible to the lecture theatre(s) where sessions are held - certainly no more than five minutes walk away.*
- *Hold tea and coffee breaks in the exhibition area and allow a minimum break time of 30 minutes. Have sufficient serving points available to allow rapid throughput and thus time for exhibition viewing.*

choice of venue (contd.)

- *It is helpful if the bar and dining hall are close by.*
- *Are there adequate security arrangements? Many exhibitors have expensive equipment on their stands, so it is important that the exhibition area be locked when not in use.*
- *Ensure that there is easy access for unloading/loading and bringing in heavy and awkward equipment. There should be no staircases to climb. If possible have janitorial assistance and porterage equipment such as trolleys available.*
- *Can suitable storage be arranged for exhibitors packing materials, cartons etc during the course of the conference?*
- *Consider the parking arrangements - by the nature of things, several exhibitors are likely to arrive and want to unload at the same time; is there adequate parking space for exhibitors vehicles reasonably close to the hall?*

facilities

- *Plan the layout using a scale plan, bearing in mind any exhibitors' wishes regarding proximity to competitors etc.*
- *There should be a good level of lighting - extra spotlights etc should not be necessary.*
- *Most stands will require 13 amp sockets. These should be available without unsightly cables being draped around the exhibition area.*
- *Some exhibitors may require temporary phones - check the procedure for this with the local Telecom office. It is useful for there to be pay-phone/card-phones adjacent to the exhibition area.*
- *Make sure that adequate furniture like tables, chairs etc is available to exhibitors.*
- *Give exhibitors reasonable pre-conference access and time for setting up stands. Have refreshments available during this period. Likewise ensure that there is adequate time to dismantle stands on the final day.*
- *Access points for loading and unloading should be well signposted.*
- *The exhibition organiser should be on hand, in particular during setting up and throughout the conference, in order to ensure that exhibitors are satisfied and any problems swiftly addressed. A member of the university/college staff should also be available to sort out problems, particularly on the first day.*

the booking process

- ***Market*** *the event to potential exhibitors through direct mail and advertising in the group newsletter or journal.*
- *In doing so indicate the type and level of delegate expected to attend and likely numbers.*
- *Give clear details of the venue and facilities for exhibitors and indicate any special conference theme.*
- *Show what opportunities there will be for delegates to view the exhibition.*

Booking Forms should be sent out well in advance of the event with a clear 'return by' date, i.e. make it absolutely crystal clear that no bookings will be accepted after a certain date. If all spaces have not been taken up two or three weeks before the deadline, consider sending a final reminder to non-respondents.

Information sent with the booking form should include the following:

- *Title, dates and venue of the conference.*
- *Outline of the group holding the conference.*
- *General description of the planned conference, anticipated number of delegates and exhibitors.*
- *Outline of the conference programme, including social events, visits etc.*
- *Information on advertising in the conference programme.*
- *Location and times of exhibition, information on bar, refreshments, meals etc.*
- *Allotment of space, size of units offered and whether shell stands are available as well as space for own stands. If possible include a floor plan and give the opportunity to select first, second and third choice of position.*
- *Indicate whether tables and chairs will be available and whether they will be charged for.*
- *Details of electrical facilities.*
- *How and where to apply for telephone facilities.*

- *Access times for setting up and dismantling. Make the initial opening time of the exhibition very clear and consider including some kind of penalty for late arrival in your "Conditions of Exhibiting".*

- *Arrangements for the receipt and secure storage of advance shipments of exhibition materials; particularly important if you expect applications from overseas.*

- *Sponsorship - you may like to invite companies to sponsor conference folders, receptions, wine, entertainment, etc. Give an indication of the items which could be sponsored, the anticipated cost and a contact name for anyone interested in this. Let it be known in the conference programme or in other relevant information for delegates that a particular company has sponsored something, e.g. "Sherry Reception courtesy of Whizzo Book Company".*

- *Cost of facilities -*
  Stand charges - does this include an exhibitor's representative?
  Cost of an additional representative and whether this includes full delegates privileges. N.B. if a conference is residential the exhibitors charge should include accommodation and meals; exhibitors representatives should be discouraged from staying off-campus and thus being less than fully involved.
  Make it clear whether the conference dinner, visits or other optional events are included in fees.
  Rate for a day visitor, including lunch, coffee etc.
  Any VAT charges should be shown.

- *Conditions of Exhibiting -*
  How and where to apply. Give a contact name and telephone, fax and telex numbers.
  Give a clear deadline date for applications.
  Cancellation policy, particularly for late cancellations.
  A clear indication of the liabilities of the organisers and exhibitors in the event of damage to property or injury to persons etc.

- *Details of any time given for product reviews. These should be staged early in the programme in order to allow delegates time to seek further information from exhibitors.*

- *A list of exhibitors at last years' conference.*

- *When confirming bookings provide adequate pre-conference information, especially maps and details of exhibition hall access, parking facilities etc. Reiterate the "complete setting up by" time.*

There is a sample of a booking form at the end of this document. You may wish to add a floor plan and the option to select preferred stand positions (see p.5) or, if appropriate, details of visits and an accompanying booking form.

general points

- *The conference programme should include time set aside for exhibition viewing with nothing else competing for delegates attention. It is also a good idea to hold an exhibitors reception after dinner on the first evening. This can be costed into exhibitors fees and include wine and 'nibbles', perhaps lasting for around two hours.*

- *Consider exhibition opening hours in relation to the rest of the programme. For instance, if a conference closes at lunchtime don't try to keep the exhibition open when most of the delegates have left. Resist "dead" time. A shorter period of well-used time is much more attractive to exhibitors than the alternative.*

- *Give ample opportunity to mix; exhibitors are not a race apart. In fact many companies employ ex-librarians so the division between "trade" and the delegates is much less marked than hitherto. In this respect it isn't a bad idea to make a table plan for the conference dinner, deliberately mixing exhibitors and delegates in the process.*

- *Make sure that the appropriate bar extensions are applied for. The bar is always an important venue for mixing, particularly in the evening, and it is essential that any social event, dance, disco or whatever has the necessary late facilities.*

- *If organising a dance, disco, etc make sure that those providing the entertainment understand their audience. It is important to wipe out those strange preconceptions people so often have about librarians.*

- *Provide each exhibitor's representative with a full delegates pack. They are interested in what is being discussed and conference papers may have a bearing on the products and services offered. The pack should contain two lists of delegates and exhibitors, one alphabetically by personal name and one by institution or company etc. Entries for day visitors should be marked with the day of attendance.*

- *The Conference Handbook should contain a "Delegates guide to the exhibition" containing information on opening times, a description of each exhibitor's products or services, location of stands and any other relevant information. The production of such a handbook can be supported by trade advertisements.*

- *Publishers may wish to display their books without going to the expense of manning a stand. Consider running a composite publishers stand, charging a fee for each book or journal displayed.*

- *Use large print badges for both exhibitors and delegates; this removes the embarrassing necessity to peer myopically at ones fellow conference-goers. If there are going to be various types of librarians in attendance (e.g. academic, medical) consider using various colour badges to differentiate between them.*

THE IDEAL CONFERENCE EXHIBITION GROUP
Annual Conference and Exhibition
1st to 3rd June 1999
University of Anywhere

EXHIBITION BOOKING FORM

BLOCK CAPITALS Please

Organisation .....

Address.....

.....

Name of Contact.....

Tel.....Fax.....Telex.....

Please reserve ..... unit(s) 2.5 metres x 1.5 metres @ £XXX (plus £XX VAT) per unit.

I require the following power points (state clearly number and wattage)

.....

I require telephone link-up for on-line facilities	YES/NO
I require ..... tables and ..... chairs	
I will bring my own stand	YES/NO
I require a shell stand	YES/NO
I wish to place an advertisement in the Conference Handbook	YES/NO
Copy is enclosed	YES/NO
Copy will follow (deadline date xx/xx/xx)	YES/NO

ONE REPRESENTATIVE IS INCLUDED IN THE COST OF EACH UNIT

Please Register (name) ..... as full residential delegate

Please Register (name) ..... as non-residential delegate

Additional Representatives

Please Register (name)..... as non-residential day delegate
@ £XX + £X VAT per person

(name).....

(name).....

Please Register (name)..... day ... as non-residential day delegate
@ £XX + £X VAT per person

(name)..... day ...

(name)..... day ...

Vegetarian diet required for ..... delegates

Costs	£
Exhibition	.....
Additional Representatives	.....
Conference Handbook Advertisement	.....
TOTAL	.....

I enclose a cheque for £ ..... made payable to ICE Group. (To keep costs down, we prefer payment with application. However, exhibitors can be invoiced if necessary.)

Please invoice me YES/NO

I require a VAT receipt YES/NO

Signed .....Position .....Date .....

PLEASE COMPLETE THE DETAILS REQUESTED ON THE NEXT PAGE

Applications should be returned to the following address not later than xx/xx/xx

A.N. Organiser, The Library, Middletown College, Middletown, Midshire MM1 2AB, U.K. Telephone 0999 123456 Fax 0999 654321 Telex 987654

PUBLISHERS COMPOSITE DISPLAY STAND

I do not wish to hire a stand, but would like.....(number) titles displayed on the publishers composite stand at a cost of £X per title. I enclose a cheque for £..... and will forward the publication(s) under separate cover to reach the above-mentioned organiser not later than xx/xx/xx.

DELEGATES GUIDE TO THE EXHIBITION

All delegates will receive a guide to the exhibits. Please describe below, in not more than sixty words, your product or service for inclusion in this guide.

.....

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PRODUCT REVIEWS

We wish to take part in the Product Review session between 11.00 and 12.30 on Sat. 2nd June. Our topic will be as follows:

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A membership list

and further details

are available from

The Secretary,
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Subscription Agents
Thames Gardens,
Charlbury,
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OX7 3QH